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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 002174

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/FO, AF/W, AF/RSA, DRL, INR/AA;

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: POLITICIANS LINING UP BEHIND JONATHAN AS PRESSURE  
MOUNTS ON YAR'ADUA TO RESIGN

REF: A. ABUJA 2173

[B](#). ABUJA 2163

[C](#). ABUJA 2152

[D](#). ABUJA 2132

Classified By: Political Counselor James P. McAnulty  
for reasons in Sections 1.4 (b) and (d).

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SUMMARY  
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[1](#). (S) Nigerian President Yar'Adua's ten-day hospitalization in Saudi Arabia has led to calls by various Nigerians, including prominent political leaders, for him to step aside and allow Vice President Goodluck Jonathan to assume office. Even some Nigerians from the predominantly Muslim North have publicly declared their support for a constitutional succession and for the President to step down for health reasons. Yar'Adua's condition has reportedly deteriorated further. END SUMMARY.

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CALLS FOR YAR'ADUA TO STEP DOWN  
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[2](#). (C) The continued hospitalization of President Yar'Adua in Saudi Arabia has prompted calls from prominent Nigerians for Yar'Adua to step aside for health reasons. Declaring that Yar'Adua's illness "created a dangerous situation whereby no one is in charge of the affairs of the State," 55 prominent Nigerians from both the North and the South signed a petition published in the press December 2 calling upon the President to resign or to demonstrate to a Federal Executive Council that he remained fit for office. Signatories included ex-House Speaker Aminu Bello Masari, former Senate President Ken Nnamani, ex-Secretary to the Government of the Federation Olu Falae, former Kaduna Governor Abdulkadir Balarabe Musa, and ex-Chief of Defense Staff Lieutenant General Alani Akinrinade. Another signer, Afenifere Renewal Group (a prominent Yoruba interest group) member Yinka Odumakin, told ConGen Lagos Political Specialist December 1 that the group would consider other (unspecified) options should Yar'Adua refuse to step aside.

[3](#). (C) Separately, a group of political leaders from predominantly-Muslim Northern states called upon Vice President Jonathan to assume the Presidency immediately if Yar'Adua becomes unable to continue in office. This group declared to the press that any "ploy to bypass the Constitution" would trigger "grave consequences for the

evolution, unity, and integrity of Nigeria."

¶4. (SBU) On December 1, the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) described as unpatriotic any calls for Yar'Adua to step aside, calling upon Nigerians to pray for his speedy recovery. The same day, the PDP-controlled Senate defeated a motion calling for Senators to debate Yar'Adua's health. Echoing one semi-conspiracy theory, a prominent Lagos financial analyst told ConGen Lagos that the recent dispute between the Senate and the House over the venue for Yar'Adua to deliver his 2010 budget (which led to its delivery via proxy to both chambers after the President left for Saudi Arabia) was "contrived" to hide that Yar'Adua had become too ill to present the budget in person. (N.B.: A political cartoon reflecting this point appeared in the December 2 edition of the newspaper "This Day." END NOTE.)

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YAR'ADUA'S HEALTH  
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¶5. (S) While some mostly pro-government media claimed on December 2 that Yar'Adua's condition had improved and that he was receiving visitors in his room, ConGen Jeddah also Qwas receiving visitors in his room, ConGen Jeddah also reported December 2 that Yar'Adua's condition had "deteriorated" as doctors had "intubated" Yar'Adua and placed him on a respirator. Ref A reports an extended conversation between the Ambassador and Information Minister Dora Akunyili confirming Yar'Adua's apparently comatose condition.

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COMMENT  
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¶6. (S) As Nigerians come to grips with the probability of Yar'Adua's demise, there appears to be growing public support -- even in the North -- for Vice President Jonathan to assume the presidential mantle. Despite widespread doubts about Jonathan's integrity and competence, there is encouraging deference, at least in public, to the principle that the constitutionally-prescribed line of succession should be respected. If Northern politicians are taking this view, the scope for military intervention or some other extra-constitutional arrangement would be greatly reduced. The situation, however, remains fluid.

¶7. (U) Embassy coordinated this telegram with ConGen Lagos.

SANDERS